

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: University of Notre Dame

Program Name: University of Notre Dame AmeriCorps Program

Application ID: 14AC156774

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant describes a compelling community need for youth development and supplementary education programs in South Bend, Indiana, as documented by: economic evidence, school graduation rates, academic test scores, and juvenile arrest rates.

The applicant uses a variety of federal, state, local, and academic sources to document the need.

The applicant provides a clear connection between the documented need and the proposed intervention, citing multiple studies that describe the desired outcomes in similar communities.

The applicant used data from three different sources (i.e., Indiana Department of Education, U.S. Census Bureau, and South Bend Community School Corporation) to document need.

The applicant noted that youth in its service area lack developmental assets as outlined in a Search Institute report.

The applicant cites data from the district and compares it to state data regarding: graduation rate; Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Assessment; and free and reduced lunch; by comparison, conditions on these metrics are worse in the district than they are across the state.

The Applicant states that the US Census Bureau and the South Bend Community School Corporation (SBCSC) reports that the graduation rate falls 11% below the state average and 20% of 18 – 24 years old have no high school degree.

The applicant reports that 58.6% of SBCSC children passed the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Assessment compared to the 72.4% statewide.

The applicant reports that school attendance and stability rates are lower than Indiana state averages.

The applicant reports that a significant percentage of area children feel their schools are unsafe.

The applicant states SBCSC free/reduced lunch exceed the state average by 23.7 %.

The applicant clearly describes and delineates roles for the proposed Members. Member duties are clearly outlined and directly aligned with the applicant's proposed Theory of Change.

Pre-service and in-service training is well designed based on the applicant's prior experience and other evidence-based program models.

The applicant describes a community partnership with the local YMCA and Boys and Girls Club that is designed to enhance Member's capacity to deliver effective services.

The applicant noted that 13 Members will be assigned to each of the program areas (three to five per program area) such that all activities can be carried out with fidelity to the model.

The applicant will employ 12 half – time, 9 quarter–time, and 11 minimal – time Members which appears to be an adequate number for conducting the program as designed.

Members will receive a year–long course of training, both initial (e.g. AmeriCorps, the community) and ongoing.

The applicant indicates that, overall, 5,580 youth and teachers will be impacted by the three proposed programs. Further, to reach and provide services to this number of program participants, 660 volunteers will be recruited, coordinated, trained, and supervised by Members and placed across 25 sites.

The applicant describes a record of success in meeting, and in many cases exceeding, most performance measurement targets.

The applicant demonstrates a record of managing successful educational programs and describes state and national awards to highlight their expertise.

The applicant consistently assesses program performance and takes corrective action when goals are not reached. For example, the applicant provided tutoring enrollment and completion data for the tutoring program, noting that both exceeded anticipated targets, but fell short in gains in academic performance. However, prior to the second year, changes were made to the program resulting in gains in academic performance results that exceeded anticipated targets.

The Applicant states their adoption of the National Performance Measure of Improved Academic Performance. They report that in Year One they fell short of the target: and in Year Two They exceeded their target. This included 20 % improvement in knowledge of violence prevention/conflict resolution as measured by the Take Ten Assessment.

The Applicant reports that, for several years, their analysis has revealed statistically significant gains for the children

who participated in their year long program. The Applicant states that ongoing assessment, analysis, reflection and revision are integral parts of Robinson Community Learning Center, which would have a impact on their future performance.

Weaknesses:

The applicant claims that children in South Bend have a low perception of the level of the safety at school, but provides no evidence to support this. In addition, it is unclear how this claim is connected with the proposed intervention.

The applicant does not provide specific dates for referenced data.

The applicant provides data in the form of percentages, but this type of data is vague in that it does not show either prevalence or severity.

Implementation of the three programs is intended to increase the likelihood that desired outcomes will be achieved as predicated, to a certain extent on having a full complement of volunteers. The applicant did not provide a contingency plan in the event that the desired number of volunteers is not reached.

The applicant discussed the past performance of both the tutoring and the Take Ten programs, but did not provide past performance information on afterschool programs (i.e., academic enrichment, social skills and personal development).

The applicant did not provide the past performance data for its outreach programs.